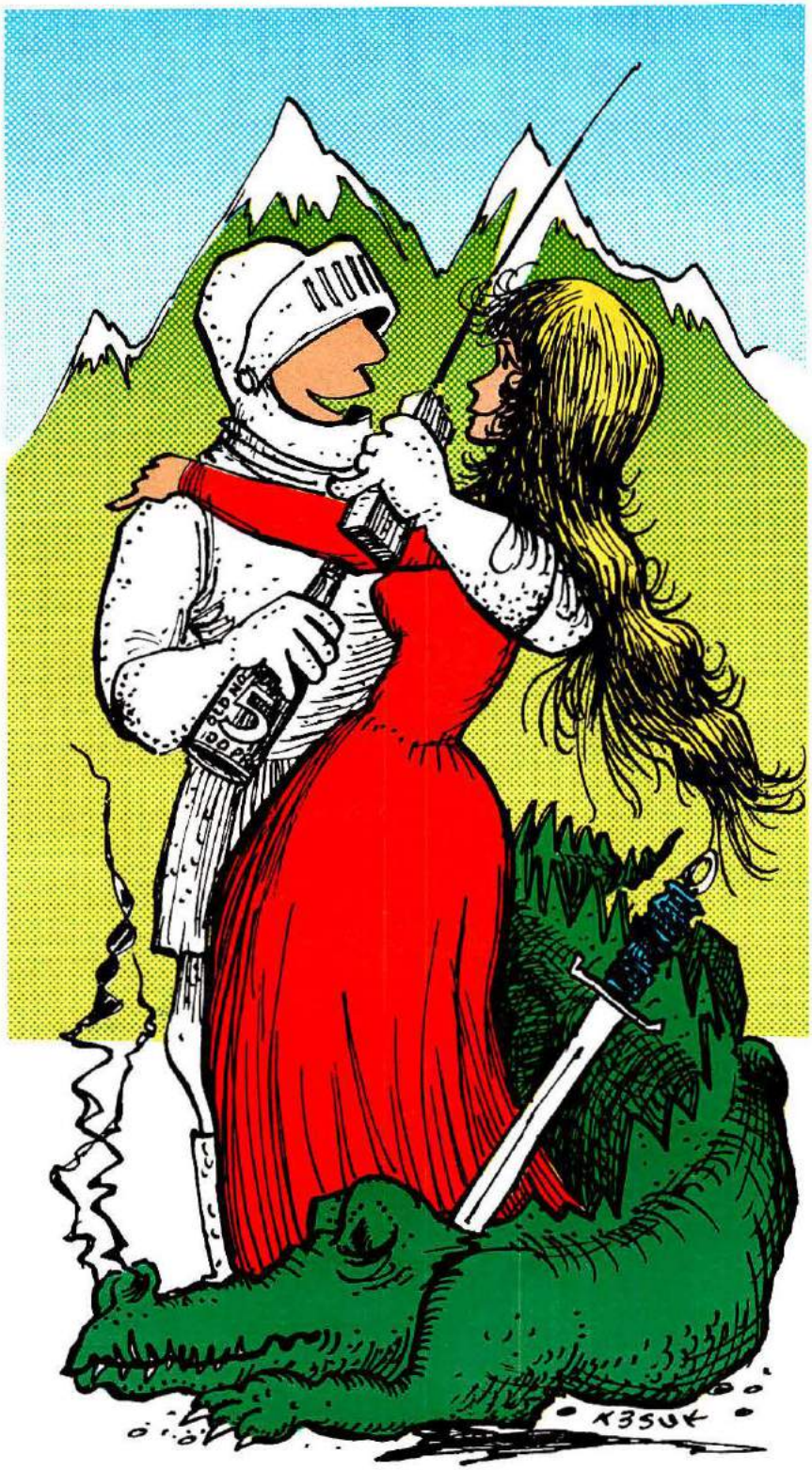

SO YOU WANT TO BE A LID!

BY A. J. MASSA, W5VSR

LID — "A term used in amateur radio to denote a poor operator; one who is inept at the practice of the art."[1]

It seems to me that the ratio of "lids" to good operators is increasing at a logarithmic rate. And why not? It's easy to be a lid. It must be — there are so many of them, and they can be found on phone and CW in great numbers. I imagine that RTTY and ATV have their share as well. If you are already a lid, read on. You may find some new and interesting "lid-isms." If you are not yet a full-fledged lid, here are some examples to follow. They have been collected after thousands of hours of listening on the ham bands.

First, go into the phone portion of the band and call CQ on CW. As most of us operated on CW before gaining phone privileges, this one is a natural. Equally good is to call a phone station, using your CW rig. But don't zero-beat the phone station, because he probably won't hear you. If you find him on USB (upper sideband), put your vfo about 1 kHz above him. If he is on LSB (lower sideband), your vfo should be about 1 kHz below him. Remember, if he wanted to be working a CW station, he would be in the CW portion of the band; so don't be too disappointed if you have to call him many, many times. Persevere!

Next, when working CW, always send faster than you are able to copy. This will use up lots of extra time when you send QRS over and over, trying to get the other fellow to slow down to a speed at which you can copy. After all, the whole point of CW is to take time. Most of us can waggle our tongues faster than we can wiggle our fingers. With CW, we really don't have to say much of any significance, and we can spend hours doing it.

I'd like to offer you more CW lid-isms, but I haven't really spent enough time listening for them. If I ever get the urge to try for the Extra class license and have to build up my code speed to 20 wpm, I guess I'll have to learn some more. Your suggestions will be appreciated.

Phone-isms

My collection of phone lid-isms is much more plentiful. It is necessary to have many phone lid-isms at your disposal (really, not a bad place to put them!), because they are used up very quickly. Here's one that is probably the most popular these days: "QRZ the frequency." I'm not sure if I should put "?" or "!" or even "." after it. You see, I'm not at all sure of what it means. The *ARRL Handbook* lists QRZ as a CW signal meaning "Who is calling me?" Actually, "QRZ?" means "Who is calling me?" That's what *The Book* says. On phone it may mean something else, although I can't imagine a frequency calling someone. It could be that the lid-ism "QRZ the frequency" is intended to mean "Is anyone on this frequency?" I'm reluctant to answer someone who says "QRZ the frequency" because 1) I'm not the frequency, and 2) I didn't call the fellow anyway. I even heard a W4 — not to denigrate 4s, some of my best friends are 4s — I heard a W4 utter "QRZ the channel." Now, there's a *real lid*. When he said that, someone responded, "This is the channel and I wasn't calling you."

I think that "QRZ the frequency" and "QRZ the channel" are real winners. Use them a lot. You'll drive experienced hams out of their gourds.

Actually, the use of "Q" signals on phone is a lid-ism in itself. They were intended to speed up CW transmissions. You will hear phone operators say that QRM is heavy — or that QRN is high. Sometimes they will clarify the situation by saying QRM-Mary, or QRN-Nancy. Of course, it might be simpler to say "interference" instead of QRM, and "static" instead of QRN, but plain language won't help you to be a lid.

So, if you want to be a lid, use Q signals on phone.

Here's one you must have ready at a moment's notice: "HI." Never, ever, laugh if you find something funny. Say, "HI," or, "HI, HI." It doesn't

"... Dog X-ray?"

really take the place of laughter, but it tells the other operator that you know how to laugh on CW — in case you ever run into him on CW and he says something funny to you then.

Always give your call phonetically when operating on phone, especially when conditions are good and signals are clear. It's another small way to take up time on the air without saying anything. I'm not sure if the FCC knows this yet, but to identify your station by saying, "This is Whiskey Five Victor Sierra Romeo," isn't legal. If your call sign is W5VSR, your phone identification quite properly should be, "This is W5VSR." If signals aren't very good, then, "This is W5VSR, Whiskey Five Victor Sierra Romeo." So, always use phonetics; and, if you can, invent new ones. Show how clever and cute you can be. A good friend of mine is W5BS; he has a lot of self-restraint.

Are you interested in DX? Put these on your DX lid-ism list. "CQ Dog X-Ray." Jazz it up a little by saying, impressively, "CQ Dog X-RAY, beaming Asia." Not only does that improve your antenna's directivity, but it lets everyone who can hear you think that you have a beam, whether you have one or not. Another one for DX enthusiasts is to put your vfo on any old frequency in the phone band and call DX to answer you on a different frequency, *without first listening on your transmitting frequency to see if it is clear.* Then crank up your mike gain, preamp, clipper, processor, and furnace, and beller forth "CQ Dog X-Ray" for five minutes without a break. Talk about attracting attention — you bet you will.

Speaking of breaking, you won't want to miss these popular lid-isms. I think we have inherited them from former CBers and CB bootleggers. Find a comfortable roundtable in progress, and say "break" — better, "breaker" — or best, "breaker, breaker." But don't give any calls; neither the station you hear nor your own. Don't listen for a few minutes first to find out if you can hear all the stations in the roundtable. Just break in and disrupt everything. If that doesn't work, start tuning up your rig on their frequency. Put your kilowatt heterodyne smack in the middle of everything. After all, the frequency is there to be enjoyed.

Here are some quickies: Say "go," or "come back," or "C'mon, good buddy," instead of "over" if you think you must say anything at all to let the other operator know you are ready to listen to him. Clear your throat, cough, sneeze, yawn, or belch with your transmitter on the air. Instead of a simple "yes," say "that's a roger," or "that's a big 10-4," or some combination thereof. When asked how much power you're using, just give a figure, like "500 watts." Don't say

If you can't hear them...

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whether it's PEP input or output, or voice average input or output. Keep 'em guessing. Too bad the FCC no longer requires us to indicate portable operation when identifying. They've taken away another opportunity for lid-isms — "this is Whiskey Five Very Strong Radio, port Five." I just typed that on my port typewriter.

Results guaranteed

Did you ever hear a phone operator who sounds like he's operating from a dungeon? Maybe he is, but even without a dungeon you can get the same effect by turning up the mike gain and holding your Golden Eagle (HI!) a foot or two from your face. Never close-talk a mike. Disc jockeys don't. If you close-talk a mike and keep the gain at a reasonable level, nobody will be able to hear what your wife is doing in the kitchen, how heavy the local traffic is, or how much hum is possible from your mike amplifier. And do use a "power mike." Everybody knows that the engineers who designed your transmitter or transceiver purposely made it short on mike gain.

There are some liddy ways to give signal reports, and these should not be overlooked. The *ARRL Handbook* describes a signal reporting system which has been around for a long, long time. It's about time for a change. Principle: give the other fellow a flattering report no matter how weak or rotten his signal is. He'll like you better. For example, if you can barely make out what he's saying — actually, you're not sure of his call — say something like, "Whiskey Five Victor Sierra Romeo, or maybe it's King Three Foxtrot Zulu Underwear. I'm not sure of your call, good buddy, but you're five by nine. What did you say your handle is? And where did you say you're located? Go." After he has made it clear who and where he is, tell him how fine his signal sounds, even if it's distorted, broad, and off frequency. He'll think you're a good guy.

Just a few more; after all, I don't want to give away all my secrets in one fell swoop.

"Ever hear a phone operator who sounds like he's operating from a dungeon?"

When calling CQ, mystify everyone by saying, "CQ twenty meter phone." Of course, you should be on twenty meters when you do this, and you should be in the phone portion and using voice transmission. Otherwise, those people out there will have no way of knowing how or where to answer. When giving your name, refer to it as your "handle." It's folksy. And say, "The handle here is ____." That's liddier than, "My name is ____." Don't forget to punctuate your remarks with "by golly" whenever possible. When you're in a large group or roundtable, give every call in the group every time you identify and use phonetics for sure.

There are many more ways to be a lid. If you have notable ones, send them to me for my collection. "We" will be seeing you down the ole log.

HRH

Reference

1. T. O. Wallis, WA5DEL, "How To Be A First Class Lid On Phone," *73*, February, 1966.